

Submission

by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

to

Productivity Commission

Vocational Education and Training Workforce

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) collects, manages, analyses, evaluates and communicates research and statistics about vocational education and training, and the links between education and the labour market more generally. Our vision is to contribute to improvements in Australia's education and training system by ensuring that policy and practice can be based on sound evidence.

RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

Data: VET Workforce

As noted in the draft Productivity Commission's research report (2010), there are over 5,000 registered training organisations (RTOs) in Australia, with an estimated workforce of the order of 150,000 employees covering the public (TAFE) and private (fee-for-service) sectors. But, there is no consistent national collection of VET workforce data. There is some data available for the public sector, but accessing accurate data on the private sector is more difficult. The need for good data on the VET workforce cannot be underestimated for policy development and planning in the VET sector.

NCVER's view is that a comprehensive statistical collection is a key element of national quality assurance arrangements, whether this is information about VET students, or the VET workforce. It may be an opportune time with new national quality arrangements underway to mandate either the provision of VET workforce data or the participation in a VET workforce survey as a condition of registration for RTOs. A national workforce data collection would need to be underpinned by an appropriate VET workforce data standard to ensure consistency and maintain data quality.

In taking this work forward, NCVER has undertaken some work relating to understanding the VET workforce. In 2010 a statistical report was published which included:

- a collection of data from the VET workforce
- a feasibility study relating to options for an ongoing data collection and
- an updated demographic profile of current VET Professionals and VET Practitioners using a variety of data sources.

The options available for collecting VET workforce data are either an administrative collection or a survey. Both have different costs and benefits and any decision must take account of the ultimate purpose of data. The significance of adequate funding cannot be overlooked when considering data collection options as the lack of funding will make collection of good data unattainable. The table below is taken from the feasibility study (Guthrie, 2010) and provides an overview of the issues associated with each collection instrument.

Table 1 Overview of issues and collection approaches

Issue	Administrative collection	Survey
Implementation time	Lengthy for full implementation but can be done in stages	Relatively quick
Primary point of contact	State training authorities in jurisdictions	Training providers
Implementation costs	Borne by jurisdictions and training organisations	Borne by commissioning agent(s) + costs in time to training organisations and individuals
Approximate costs*	<u>First year (including development)</u> \$250K + significant costs for jurisdictions to change or set up systems <u>Subsequent years</u> Cost would reduce by approx \$50K. Costs to jurisdictions for maintenance would still exist	<u>First year (including development)</u> Between \$500K (online) to \$610K (mail-out) based on approximate sample sizes of 1175 RTOs and 37 500 employees + \$200K for telephone follow-up <u>Subsequent years</u> Cost would reduce by approx \$20K once survey development completed
Ongoing costs?	Expensive to set up but that reduces once systems are in place	Data collection costs do not reduce over time
Compliance?	Yes, once agreement is reached among all parties	Non-response may be an issue
Access to non-TAFE workforce?	Unlikely but could be a requirement for all in receipt of government funding	Yes, if training providers agree to assist to identify staff
Measure of size of the workforce?	Yes, but subject to limitations above	Yes, but subject to limitations of sampling frame

1 Note: * These estimates are indicative only. They are based on NCVER undertaking the work and using existing infrastructure where possible. Costs would be greater if this were not the case.

Completed research

- This compendium contains three reports about the VET workforce. The first examines the size and attributes of the vocational education and training (VET) workforce using a variety of data sources. The second looks more specifically at TAFE's workforce. The final report considers the feasibility of a national VET workforce collection. The compendium updates earlier NCVER work on VET workforce numbers and characteristics.

Reference

Guthrie, H (ed.), 2010, Vocational education and training workforce data 2008: A compendium NCVER, Adelaide. Available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2218.html>

Productivity Commission, 2010, Vocational education and training workforce, draft research report, Productivity Commission, Canberra. Available at: http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/103813/vocational-education-training-draft.pdf